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**COMPUTER SYSTEM WARRANTY UPGRADE METHOD AND APPARATUS
WITH CONFIGURATION CHANGE DETECTION FEATURE**

Cross Reference to Related Patent Application

This patent application is related to the copending, commonly assigned patent application entitled COMPUTER SYSTEM WARRANTY UPGRADE METHOD AND APPARATUS (Attorney Docket Number: 16356.659,) filed concurrently herewith.

Background

The disclosures herein relate generally to computer systems and more particularly to upgrading the warranties associated with such systems.

Computer systems are typically sold with a base warranty that provides for repair or replacement of the system if a component of the system fails during an initial warranty period. A particular model computer system may be sold in many different configurations. For example, the processor will be available in several different clock frequencies; memory is available in many different increments; the size of disk storage will vary; and different video and audio controllers may be employed. In other words, different machines will have different field replaceable units (FRU's) or modules in their configurations. The warranty typically attaches to the system in the condition it leaves the factory, systems integrator or reseller. If a

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user makes changes to the configuration after sale, it is possible that the initial warranty will be void or will not cover the new configuration.

However, customers do in fact frequently make changes to the system configuration after sale. For example, a larger hard disk drive or a higher performance video card may be added. This presents a problem when the user approaches the seller asking for an upgraded warranty covering the new configuration. A question immediately arises as to what the price of the upgraded warranty should be. One typical approach is a "one size fits all" upgraded warranty price. In that case, a single warranty price is quoted that is the same for all configurations of a particular model computer system even though the configurations vary. Here the warranty price is based on the average of expected warranty costs spread across the many different configurations of a particular model. Unfortunately, if you guess wrong in determining the upgraded warranty price, substantial revenue can be lost.

Another problem associated with warranties is fraud. It is difficult to track exactly which FRU's or modules a customer has in a machine. In the past a number uniquely associated with a particular machine, for example an Express Service Code number or Service Tag number, was stored together with some configuration information by the seller. An unscrupulous user may make changes to the computer system configuration and then call the computer seller and attempt to obtain service on components not originally in the system. When the customer has paid for a warranty upgrade covering components not originally in the system as sold, it is a challenging problem to know which particular components, modules or FRU's are in the upgraded system.

Still another problem associated with warranty upgrades is that some users do not know that a warranty upgrade is needed when a configuration change is made. Also, unless a user keeps scrupulous notes, the user may not recall all configuration changes made prior to calling for warranty service on the current configuration.